

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 29, 2022

Lawrence A. Tabak D.D.S., Ph.D.
Acting Director
National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Acting Director Tabak,

We write to inquire about the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) recent decision to award the Washington National Primate Research Center (WaNPRC) at the University of Washington an additional \$65 million grant. The funding signals an apparent oversight of the well-documented noncompliance with state health standards at the facility and disregards the cruel primate experiments taking place at WaNPRC that contribute little to advances in human medicine.

NIH has previously investigated the taxpayer-funded experiments performed at WaNPRC for the high mortality rates in often-endangered primate species kept in the facility. Furthermore, the Washington primate center's practices have led to many ethics concerns, including staff admitting under oath to destroying records, violations of federal spending transparency law, illegal importation of sick primates into the country, and monkeys dying under mysterious circumstances.^{1,2}

With the award of this additional funding, NIH is disregarding these flagrant actions by WaNPRC. Based on their track record, it is clear that these new funds will undoubtedly be used to further abuse these animals in futile experiments. These decisions raise serious concerns over the NIH's grant review process and priorities, as this grant will waste millions of federal dollars to produce data which NIH admits provides limited benefits for human medicine. Accordingly, we urge the Department of Health and Human Services to review and oversee these projects with more scrutiny. This will ensure these grants do not violate animal testing ethics standards or risk wasting federal dollars with no real benefit to medicine.

Other federal agencies have already begun the process of reducing primate research due to its lack of contribution to improving human health and the increasing availability of research alternatives. Over the past year through bipartisan efforts Congress has clearly indicated its position on these issues, resulting in passage of legislation directing the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to reduce or eliminate its use of primates by 2025.³ The agency has stated that the "VA is completely aligned with Congressional calls to reduce the use of sensitive species (canine, feline, non-human primate) in VA research studies" and it is in the process of

¹ <https://www.peta.org/media/news-releases/disgraceful-peta-ads-slam-nih-multimillion-dollar-taxpayer-handout-to-troubled-primate-lab/>

² <https://blog.whitecoatwaste.org/2021/09/09/wcw-exposes-secretive-spending-at-taxpayer-funded-primate-prisons/>

³ https://www.research.va.gov/programs/animal_research/VA-5-year-plan-for-Sensitive-Species-reduction-elimination.docx

identifying alternatives and cutting primate use.⁴ Although Congress has also previously called on NIH to curb primate use, it has not made substantial progress to fulfill these requests. We urge you to reverse this harmful practice and to follow the precedent set forth by the VA.

In light of the serious ethical concerns and noncompliance issues highlighted above, we request that HHS explain NIH's decision to approve this new WaNPRC grant that perpetuates outdated and inefficient primate experiments rather than ethical and translatable research. Additionally, we ask for information on efforts to curb the use of primates in research at the NIH, as well as a full explanation if these efforts are not currently in place.

We greatly appreciate your timely attention to these matters and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

⁴ <https://www.onegreenplanet.org/animalsandnature/victory-us-department-of-veterans-affairs-stops-experimenting-on-monkeys>